

RIVER VALLEY TIMES

41ST YEAR • ISSUE 22

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NOVEMBER 21, 2025

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UNDEFEATED SEASON**



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Veterans Day Event Celebrates Heroes



Rancho Murieta residents and Scouts welcome Navy veteran Alan Amark to the RMA Building on Nov. 11 during a Veterans Day celebration that recognized all past and current members of the Armed Services.

**Story and photos
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - On Nov. 11, Rancho Murieta held its own Veterans Day celebration honoring past and current members of the Armed Services for their service to the country.

Approximately 250 people attended the 10th annual event to enjoy

coffee, conversation and a short program. The Rancho Murieta Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary 12215 hosted the gathering at the RMA Building.

The celebration began outside, where dozens of children, adults and Scouts lined the walkway, waving small American flags and cheering as they thanked veterans for their service. Veteran Angelo Lutz hadn't expected such a large turnout.

"It was really something," he said.

Inside, veterans gathered at decorated tables to sip coffee, enjoy donuts and, most importantly, share military experiences with fellow veterans, family and friends.

The focus on honoring veterans was woven through every part of the event. The decorations included service-branch flags hanging in front of the windows, patriotic

centerpieces at each table and an embellished table filled with donated coffee and pastries.

Each veteran received raffle tickets for an array of prizes donated by local businesses and for baskets assembled by the Auxiliary.

The Auxiliary added a blast from the past with a slide show featuring photos furnished by veterans and their families. It played

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Audits, Reserves are Finance Meeting Topics



Cecilia Min, director of Finance and Administration, is praised for her commitment to getting the right answers at the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Finance Committee meeting on Nov. 13. File photo

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Long-delayed audits, confusion over reserve policies and unusually strong praise for the district's finance director dominated the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Finance Committee meeting on Nov. 13.

The Finance Committee is made up of Board President John Merchant, Director Bill Gere, Director of Finance and Administration Cecilia Min, Interim General Manager Amelia Wilder and other district staff. The committee reviews financial issues in depth and refers its recommendations to the entire board.

Audit Progress and Remaining Work

Min reported that preparation for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 audits has been slower than expected.

"Mostly, we are stuck on the bank reconciliations," she said. "There were a lot of duplicated transactions and transactions that weren't voided... But we are about 85% done."

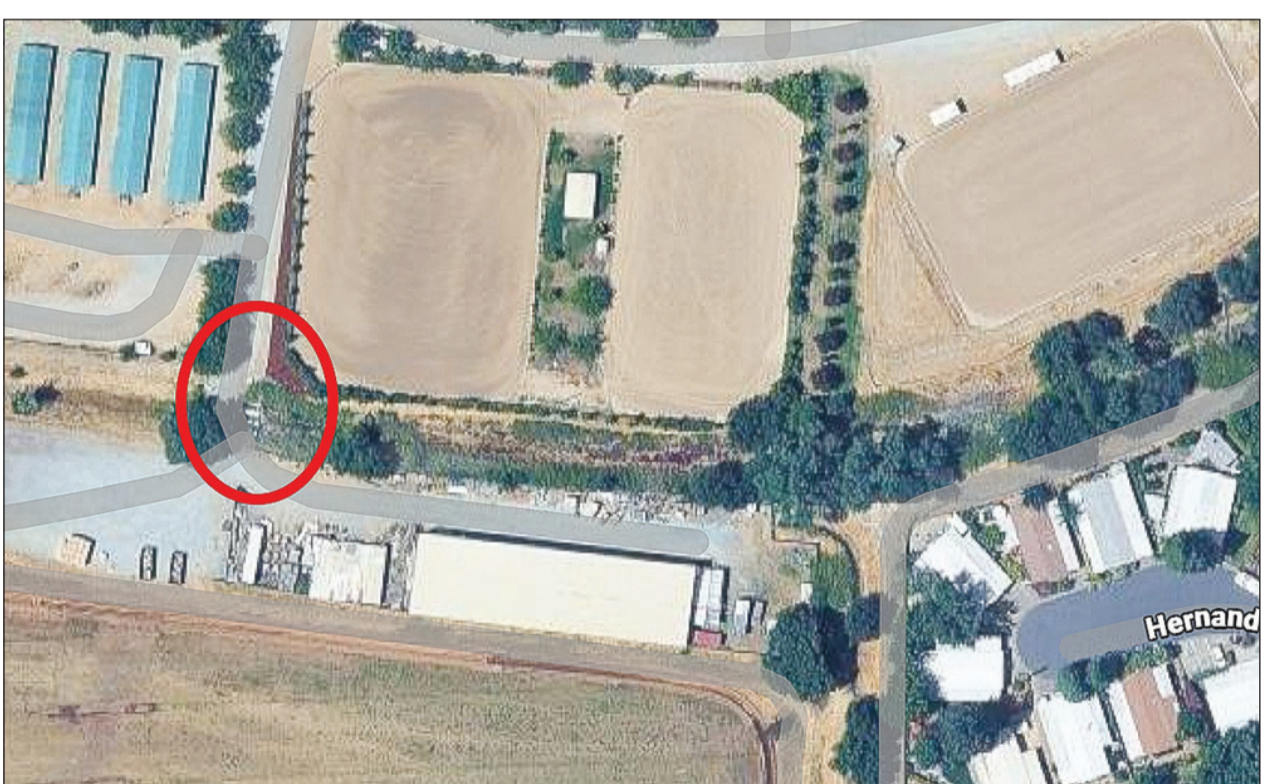
Min said she hopes auditors can begin their work shortly after the new year.

"I think in January, I will be able to coordinate with the auditor to come in and start the audit," she said. "Hopefully, they can finish it within two weeks."

She added that handling two years of audit records simultaneously has contributed to the delay. To keep the work on track, Min has temporarily set aside the 2024-25 audit so staff can concentrate on completing the 2022-23 and 2023-24 audits first. Once those two audits are finished, she said she will

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CSD Faces Costly Culvert Repair



A Google Maps image shows where the culverts are failing in a stormwater drainage channel at the Murieta Equestrian Center. An easement requires the Rancho Murieta Community Services District to maintain the ditch. Courtesy photos

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Contract engineer Joe Domenichelli brought more unwelcome financial news when he met with the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Improvements Committee on Nov. 4, marking the second straight month of troubling cost news.

The district had asked him for an estimate to repair four stormwater drainage culverts beneath the road connecting the Murieta Equestrian Center to its hay barn. He estimated

the cost of the preferred repair option at \$467,000.

The district is responsible for maintaining the drainage ditch and its connections because it holds an easement on the channel, which carries stormwater from Rancho Murieta North toward the Cosumnes River. If the culverts fail, nearby areas, including Murieta Village, could flood. In preparation for winter, the district has already cleared heavy vegetation from the ditch.

While the equestrian center's project manager estimated the repair at no more than \$105,000, Domenichelli's

figures ranged from \$285,000 to \$603,000. He and Utilities Supervisor Corey Carskaddon recommended replacing the culverts with a prefabricated bridge or railcar span.

The full board was scheduled to discuss the recommendation on Nov. 19. The committee also reviewed a possible site for a third water tank and the likely need to establish alternating lawn-watering days next summer. (See separate story this issue.)

The Improvements Committee includes Board President John

Continued on page 2

CSD Faces Costly Culvert Repair

Continued from page 1

Merchant, Director Randy Jenco, Interim General Manager Amelia Wilder, Chief Plant Operator Travis Bohannon, Carskaddon and district staff. The group reviews infrastructure issues and makes recommendations to the full board.

Domenichelli had already reported at the Oct. 2 meeting that repairing the Murieta Village water and sewer infrastructure could cost \$9 million and a third water tank between \$7.8 million and \$9.8 million.

Oct. 2 Improvements

The culverts were first discussed at the Oct. 2 Improvements Committee meeting, which both Merchant and Carskaddon missed. Carskaddon submitted a PowerPoint presentation with his analysis. Bohannon told Jenco that Jeff Pearson, the equestrian center’s project manager, had warned that repairs were needed before the rainy season.

Bohannon said he and Carskaddon reviewed the easement Pearson provided and concluded that while the easement required maintaining the drainage ditch, the road over it was likely built after the easement was granted. They believed the district was not obligated to repair the road or the culverts. Their recommendation was to remove the road and the failed culverts entirely, because they were obstructing water flow, an approach that would not benefit the equestrian center.

“The way it is clogged up, if we have a big storm, it is going to flood over there,” Bohannon said. He added that he requested a preliminary estimate for repairing the crossing with concrete culverts and was told the cost would be close to \$1 million.

Pearson disputed the district’s

interpretation, saying the easement language was clear that the district was responsible for all drainage facilities within the ditch. He said he confirmed with Carol Anderson Ward that the road was already in place when the Anderson family dedicated the easement to the district in 1988.

Pearson told the committee he first raised the issue with Operations Manager Eric Houston in May and followed up several times because he believed the culverts were likely to fail in a major storm.

“It’s going to flood the new property owners on the 203 acres between us and the river, and the Village probably won’t fare very well, either,” he said.

Pearson said he could make the repairs himself for about \$80,000 but did not have the staff. If bid out, he estimated the cost to the district would be \$100,000 to \$105,000.

Mike Robertson of Baker-Williams Engineering Group confirmed that the easement language requires the district to maintain the drainage facility and related appurtenances. He said the culverts had simply reached the end of their service life – “Corrugated steel pipes usually have about a 50-year life” – and the ditch also needed cleaning. Robertson offered to help bring Carskaddon up to speed on the community’s drainage history.

Jenco said repairs “should have been completed yesterday” but wanted District Counsel Patrick Enright to review the easement to confirm the district’s responsibility. He asked staff to place an action item on the Oct. 15 board agenda in case emergency repairs costing about \$100,000 were necessary.

Bohannon said the ditch had become completely overgrown and that Carskaddon was looking into bringing



A Google Maps image shows the location of the ditch clearance work. Courtesy photos

in an inmate crew from the Pine Grove Conservation Camp to clear it.

“They could probably have it knocked out in a week, quicker than goats and a lot cheaper than goats.”

Jenco said Wilder could approve that expenditure.

Oct. 15 Board

At the Oct. 15 board meeting, Carskaddon said the district should not assume responsibility for the culverts or the road because neither appeared to be part of the easement or supported by other documentation. He said the district was responsible for maintaining the ditch and that an inmate crew would be coming to clear it. He cited an estimated repair cost of approximately \$500,000.

Pearson strongly disputed the district’s stance and expressed frustration that none of the materials he submitted had been included in the packet for either the Improvements Committee or the board meeting.

“I provided all of the information to the district because the district could not locate that information,” he said. “I had to comment on a PowerPoint slide that was wholly inaccurate without having any of my material.”

Pearson said he followed up repeatedly after contacting Houston in May because he believed the culverts could fail during the next major storm.

“I was assured the district was handling this,” he told the board.

After discussion, the board agreed with Jenco’s recommendation to table the matter until Enright could review the easement language.

Nov. 4 Improvements

Before the Nov. 4 meeting, Wilder confirmed that the district’s responsibility for repairs was no longer in question, as Enright had determined the district was obligated to do the work. The discussion instead focused on repair options. Both Domenichelli and Pearson expressed

appreciation for the vegetation-clearing work, noting that the ditch should now perform better in winter.

Domenichelli presented four options, with estimates including permits, demolition, removal of the road and culverts and installation of necessary support structures. The least expensive option, at \$285,000, would replace the failed corrugated metal pipes with new ones of the same material. Reinforced concrete pipe was estimated at \$478,000, and reinforced concrete box culverts at \$603,000.

The fourth option – replacing the culverts with a modular bridge or railcar span – came in at \$467,000. Domenichelli and Carskaddon agreed the bridge offered the best long-term solution due to its flow capacity, durability and value compared to replacing culverts with pipes or box structures.

Pearson raised several questions about the bridge option and appeared satisfied with the responses. Jenco, who has experience building bridges including the wooden bridge in Rancho Murieta, believed Domenichelli was understating permit costs from the Department of Fish and Wildlife and possibly the Army Corps of Engineers.

It was also noted that the season was too late to begin repair work.

Domenichelli and Pearson both praised the vegetation-clearing work in the ditch.

“It’s a way better channel than it was a month ago,” Domenichelli said, though he added that more work is needed. Pearson said, “I believe that we’re in a better position because of the work that Corey and the crews have done.”

On Nov. 13, Carskaddon told the River Valley Times that district employees and a Pine Grove Conservation Camp crew had removed vegetation, rocks and debris and trimmed trees along roughly 4,885 feet of the channel to improve water flow and reduce erosion.

This story is online at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★



This image shows the condition of the ditch before the clearance work began.



This image shows the ditch after the work.

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Mustangs Complete Undefeated Season in Elk Grove Soccer League

Rancho Murieta Mustangs News Release

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The Rancho Murieta Mustangs (Elk Grove Soccer 2014B RM Mustangs) have capped off an extraordinary undefeated season in the Elk Grove Soccer Club's U12 Boys Bracket A division, finishing 9-0-0 with an impressive 58 goals scored and only 15 conceded.

Led by Head Coach Brandon Tafoya and assistant coaches William Burnett, Johnny Delgadillo, Richard Essaff and Erik Yabut, the Mustangs stood out for their relentless drive, teamwork and discipline both on and off the field.

"Our kids outworked every other team in this division, in both practice and on the field," said Coach Burnett. "They earned every win through hustle, focus and commitment to one another."

The team's final match - a 5-2 victory over the Junior Eagles on Nov. 8 - drew an outpouring of community support. Families, friends and Rancho Murieta residents packed the sidelines to cheer on the Mustangs, turning the match into a spirited hometown celebration. The atmosphere reflected the strong bond between the players and their community, with chants, cheers and smiles that made the victory even more memorable.

The Mustangs coaches would like to thank the players for their hard work, commitment and



The Rancho Murieta Mustangs, posing for a team photo are, first row from left: Logan Essaff, Mason Ross, Luke Hanaman, Calvin Buford, Owen Yabut, Daniel Delgadillo, Arthur Tavares, Peyton Pollock, Kellan Griffith, Avery Keslar and Elias Eller. Second row: Coach Brandon Tafoya, Coach Richard Essaff, Liam Burnett, Cameron Montoya, Joshua Colton, Drew Barentson, Coach Johnny Delgadillo, Russel Stephens, Beau Elorduy, Coach Erik Yabut and Coach William Burnett. Photos courtesy of Rancho Murieta Mustangs



Left and above: The Rancho Murieta Mustangs, in blue, face the Junior Eagles on their way to an undefeated season in the Elk Grove Soccer Club's U12 Boys Bracket A division.

dedication; the parents for their unwavering support, loud cheering, and for getting the players to practices and games on time; and the Rancho Murieta community for its incredible

encouragement throughout the season. Their collective support has been the backbone of the team's success and has made this undefeated run truly special. The Mustangs' success

reflects not only their dedication but also the encouragement from families and the Rancho Murieta community. Many of these young athletes have been teammates for

years, growing together into a cohesive, high-performing squad that exemplifies sportsmanship, dedication and pride. As the Mustangs look ahead to future

tournaments and the next competitive season, they'll carry forward the momentum of an unbeaten campaign and the pride of representing Rancho Murieta with excellence. ★

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Vitalant Collects 51 Pints at Blood Drive



The St. Vincent de Paul Church meeting room is hopping when the Rancho Murieta Women's Club and the St. Vincent De Paul Society present the quarterly community blood drive on Oct. 27. Vitalant collected 51 pints of blood at the event. In the photo on the left, Justin Hayduk is a first-time donor. He is chatting with Vitalant nurse Kristen G. In the photo above, volunteers at the reception desk are, from right to left, Don Kolmodin, Debbie Komodin and Sharon McGowan. Photos by Gail Bullen



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Wilton Winter Festival Slated for Dec. 6

By Patsy Nemetz

WILTON, CA (MPG) - Kick off the holiday season with a full day of festive fun at the 17th annual Wilton Winter Festival & Parade! Bring your family, friends and holiday cheer: There's something for everyone!

The event will be held rain or shine at the Wilton Community Center (9717 Colony Road) on Saturday, Dec. 6 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Bring the kids for a warm breakfast and then head into Santa's Workshop for free crafts and cookie decorating. Kids will receive a Santa's Passport to fill with stamps as they enjoy Santa's Workshop crafts from 8 a.m. to noon and stay to meet Santa himself. Complete the passport and earn a holiday prize!

Afterwards, stroll through the vendor marketplace to start your Christmas shopping with local makers and artisans. Stay for the parade at noon and Santa's grand arrival; then finish the day with free cookies and hot cocoa with Santa himself!

Event Schedule

Pancake and Sausage Breakfast from 8 to 10 a.m. (for purchase); Kids' Crafts in Santa's Workshop from 8 a.m. to noon (free); holiday and craft vendors from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.; hot lunch from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. (for purchase); parade with Santa's Arrival from noon to 1 p.m.; and Cookies & Hot Cocoa with Santa from 1 to 2 p.m. (free). Roads will close at 11:30 a.m.

Join us for this magical, family-friendly Wilton tradition; we can't wait to celebrate with you!

Parade applications are open and can be found along with other important information on the Wilton Community Center website at wiltoncommunitycenter.com.

This event is sponsored by the Sacramento County CSA4B Council and the Wilton Community Center Nonprofit. ★



The 17th annual Wilton Winter Festival & Parade returns Saturday, Dec. 6 at the Wilton Community Center with family-friendly activities including Santa's Workshop, free crafts and cookie decorating. River Valley Times file photo

Third Water Tank Site, Water Conservation Discussed

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Eight topics were on the agenda – most of them related to water – when the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Improvements Committee met on Nov. 4.

The committee was updated on a developer meeting, discussed a site for a third water tank, considered a water conservation program and talked about finding more water. An audience member questioned whether developers are paying their fair share.

Another topic involved failing culverts at the Murieta Equestrian Center that could lead to flooding. (See related story.)

The Improvements Committee is currently made up of Board President John Merchant, Director Randy Jenco, Interim General Manager Amelia Wilder, Chief Plant Operator Travis Bohannon, Utilities Supervisor Corey Carskaddon and other staff. The committee reviews infrastructure issues and forwards recommendations to the full board.

Developer Meeting

Bohannon provided an update on the Oct. 20 private meeting with developer Bob Keil, Rancho North developers, Merchant, Director Bill Gere and district staff.

The meeting was prompted by Merchant and District Counsel Patrick Enright abruptly informing Keil and his partners that they would be required to enter into an agreement to build a third water tank in order to receive water meters for the Residences subdivision. It was also driven by Wilder's unexpected announcement that they must pay additional fees under a Facility Services Agreement.

Bohannon said the group discussed the need for a third 2.5-million-gallon tank, possible sites, water meters for the Residences and the 670 Facility Services Agreement. Keil said the meeting



A map showing the proposed location of a third water tank is discussed at the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Improvements Committee on Nov. 4. Courtesy photo

had been productive.

"I do want to have some sort of formal follow-up. It's been a couple of weeks, and I don't know where we stand on some of these items."

Third Water Tank Site

Bohannon said the group agreed that Site 4 above Chesbro Reservoir was the preferred location for a third water tank. The land is owned by Carol Anderson Ward and Rancho Murieta Properties.

"She did affirm she was agreeable with this option and that she would provide the land," Bohannon said. Gere also proposed a less visible Site 4B, and development engineer Mike Robertson suggested another variation.

Much discussion followed about the various site possibilities, with District Engineer Joe Domenichelli providing technical details.

Bohannon then raised a second issue, saying he wanted to meet with Domenichelli, Carskaddon and Robertson to design a

pump station for the site, with the goal of presenting a proposal next month.

Jenco added that a commitment from Rancho Murieta Properties to dedicate two acres and needed access was also required.

Rancho Murieta Properties CEO Greg Dyer said the tank would "pretty much eliminate the value of the land between the tank and the water treatment plant," meaning a larger parcel would likely be needed. He noted that about 30 acres of high ground are available and suitable for future tanks.

Dyer also said there had been some miscommunication about providing the land.

"We would like to cooperate because down the road, it will help us as well. But, right now, we are not going to provide the land for free."

Saying she wanted to move the process along, Wilder asked Dyer to return with cost estimates for what would work best at Site 4.

Merchant agreed to

continue with Site 4.

"Let's see what the whole thing adds up to," he said. "Then we can have another fight on how it gets apportioned."

Water Conservation Program

Bohannon opened the water conservation discussion, explaining that the throttle-valve system needed to fill the Rio Oso tank during peak summer use would not be ready by spring. That could affect the 800 customers above Guadalupe Drive and in the Residences subdivision. He recommended developing a voluntary conservation program, such as alternate-day watering, and emphasized the need for simple outreach. Merchant agreed. Jenco asked Bohannon to bring proposals to the next meeting.

Finding Water

Bohannon reported that Water System Consultants was reviewing well-study data from the 1970s and drafting a well-siting memorandum for early

December.

Jenco emphasized finishing the Integrated Water Master Plan so the district can determine how much water will be needed for future development. Merchant essentially told him there was no urgency because the Working Group already agreed with master plan consultant Lisa Maddaus' demand numbers.

"We have a reasonably good handle on demand," he said.

After Jenco and Merchant went back and forth, Wilder said she would place Jenco's request for a proposal from Maddaus on the next board agenda.

Working Group member Jim Farrell said it was "pretty safe to say" the district needs an additional 2,500 acre-feet of water and urged moving forward with Water System Consultants.

Developer Payments

Farrell raised the need for clear cost allocation between development-related work and operational

expenses. Concerned about the burden on district staff, he asked, "Are everyday ratepayers paying for the cost of trying to find more water because somebody wants to build new homes?"

Responding later in the meeting, Keil said everyone agrees the community needs productive wells; the question is who will pay for them.

"For sure, if there is no development, I know who is paying for the wells," he said.

Keil noted that developers contribute through water-augmentation fees. If \$8 million to \$10 million in developer fees are removed from the equation, he said, the existing ratepayers would be left to cover roughly \$15 million.

Developers also pay deposits for their projects, Keil added, and the district bills staff time and professional services to those accounts. Addressing Farrell, he said, "I want you to make sure you understand that all of the staff time you're talking about is compensated."

Other Business

Bohannon reported reservoir levels as of Oct. 31: Calero 60.7% (1,257.59 acre-feet), Chesbro 90.7% (860.5 acre-feet) and Clementia 80.1% (520.45 acre-feet). With batter boards, Calero was at 55.1%.

He also reviewed capital improvement projects and will bring a status report to the board.

Jenco said he will ask the board to approve appointments to the ad hoc Water Vision Committee, which will assist Water System Consultants with well-site selection.

Wilder suggested involving the Sloughouse Resource Conservation District in groundwater discussions. Merchant agreed. The district is a public agency that focuses on groundwater management, watershed health, habitat restoration and soil conservation.

This story is online at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Christmas Dinner Dance Dec. 5

Please join us for a Christmas Dinner Dance on Friday Dec. 5 from 5:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, 14673 Cantova Way, Rancho Murieta.

Enjoy a buffet dinner of prime rib, mashed potatoes, green beans, salad and dessert. The no-host bar opens at 5:30 with dinner at 6:30. There will be raffles and prizes, and then music and dancing from 8 to 10.

Tickets are \$55 per adult and are on sale before and after the Saturday and Sunday Masses at St. Vincent de Paul starting the weekend of Nov. 9 and 10 or by calling Sherry at 916-844-5171.

Kiwanis Seeks Sweats for Vets Donations

The Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta seeks monetary donations to its Sweats for Vets program, which runs through the end

of December.

Make checks payable to Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta-Sweats for Vets. and mail to Kiwanis at P.O. Box 855, Rancho Murieta, or place in the drop box at the Rancho Murieta Association Building.

Women's Club Seeks Hostesses for Home Tour

The Rancho Murieta Women's Club is seeking hostesses or hosts for the club's Holiday Home tour on Saturday, Dec. 13. In exchange for a two-hour shift, hostesses wishing to tour the other homes get their tickets for half price: \$17.50.

If you can help, please contact Boots Conway at 916-690-4058 or bootsconway484@gmail.com.

Christmas Tree Lighting Slated Nov. 28

The Rancho Murieta Association Recreation Committee will present the annual Christmas Tree Lighting at 5:30

p.m. Friday, Nov. 28 at Stonehouse Park.

After Santa Claus leads the countdown, he and Mrs. Claus will sit on their throne so children can share their Christmas lists and parents can take pictures.

Hot cocoa and cookies will be served. Fire pits also are planned.

Kiwanis Seeks Crab Feed Sponsors before Dec. 2

The Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta, in partnership with the Knights of Columbus, is seeking sponsors for the 12th Annual Crab Feed on Jan. 31 at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church. The sponsorship deadline is Dec. 2. Contact Bonnie for more sponsorship details at 916-502-3260.

The Crab Feed is the largest fundraiser for our Kiwanis Club. The evening includes a delicious crab meal, a silent auction, a dessert auction and our extravagant raffle.

Tickets will go on sale in January. We are accepting sponsorships now. Sponsorships range from \$300 to \$5,000 with a variety of excellent benefits. In addition, we have a limited number of business size ads on the placemat for \$75 each.

Contact Dia at 916-956-2920 for more information. Stay up to date by following our Facebook page Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta. Thanks to the Knights of Columbus for their crab feed sponsorship.

Wilton Bingo Set for Dec. 6

Wilton Bingo is held the first Saturday of every month. The next bingo will be on Saturday, Dec. 6 in the Wilton Community Center, 9717 Colony Road at Dillard Road. Doors open at 5 p.m. with food available for sale and bingo starts at 6 p.m.

All proceeds go to two nonprofits: the local Park Council and the Wilton History Group. ★

Audits, Reserves are Finance Meeting Topics

Continued from page 1

shift resources back to 2024-25. "That should be a fast one," she said.

Min said she will focus on the current-year 2025-26 financials, with the goal of producing a preliminary financial statement by early January so it aligns with the first presentation of the 2026-27 budget in February.

"If my financials for 25-26 are not done, we have a problem," she said.

Financial Report

Regarding the current 2025-26 accounting, Min said she has already set up the district's new Chart of Accounts and begun to upload data. She told the board on Oct. 15 that the old Chart of Accounts contained roughly 2,050 lines of accounting, which she described as "really confusing" for a small agency.

Min also reported that activating two additional modules in the district's Great Plains financial system has gone smoothly. The automated allocation module now distributes administrative costs to the district's various funds, replacing what had been a labor-intensive manual process.

Committee Chair John Merchant noted the improvement during the meeting.

"Looking down at the bottom of the page, for the first time in history we have two numbers that are the same," he said. "We never understood that Great Plains could do this."

Min said she is also evaluating whether to move Great Plains to a cloud-based platform because the district's onsite server has become unreliable. A new server would cost about

\$12,000, while the cost of migrating to the cloud is not yet known. One advantage of the cloud option, she noted, is that it would provide the latest version of Great Plains and ongoing updates.

Review of Restricted Reserve Funds

Min presented a chart summarizing restricted reserve fund balances for the audited fiscal years 2020-21 and 2021-22, as well as preliminary figures for 2022-23 and 2023-24. She also identified the sources of the funds, which come from either developer fees or ratepayer fees.

For 2023-24, the reserves totaled \$11.1 million. After subtracting capital improvement project commitments, the amount actually available dropped to \$8.4 million. The figures did not include

depreciation, which Min said affects how much the district should be collecting for long-term replacement of infrastructure. She added that even the full \$11 million before project spending is not sufficient, given that district infrastructure is valued at about \$24 million.

Outdated Reserve Policy

Min then shifted the committee's attention to the district's Operating Fund and Reserve Policy, last updated in 2012. The policy was projected on the screen as she walked through several issues.

"We still have a lot of work to do... because this policy needs a lot of update," she said. Her handout indicated that staff expects to bring a revised version to the next meeting.

A lengthy discussion followed about the policy and its implications

for long-term planning. The complexity prompted a comment from Wilder, who said that in her six years with the district, Min was the first finance director to examine the policies closely and try to reconcile them with the audit work.

"It's a perfect example of why the audit is taking longer than expected, because everything you are doing brings you to these conundrums. Why did we collect this? Why did we stop collecting this?" she said.

Min agreed. "It's not just doing the mechanical mathematics. It's reading the policy and understanding if we did it right... so it takes a little longer," she said. "We have been collecting way less than we should have been, even in the connection fees."

Merchant added that Min was the first to question why money had never been placed into a replacement fund described in the

policy. "I've been here for 30 years, and we never had a discussion like that in our lives," he said. "You have been and are doing a fantastic job every day."

Staff Praise

Wilder said she had "seen more movement in the past six or seven months than I have seen in six years."

Chief Plant Operator Travis Bohannon also offered praise, saying, "I don't think Cecilia gets the recognition she deserves. You can literally see the smoke coming out of her ears because of how hard she's working."

"She doesn't let these things go," Wilder added. "She is not only committed to getting answers; she's committed to getting the right answers. We love her."

This story is online at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★

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ARREST LOGS UPDATED DAILY

Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



November 5 seems like a long time ago, but that's the last time the Sacramento Kings won a basketball game. Since then, it has been a string of defeats that now registers six with an average deficit of 20 points per defeat.

When things are going this badly, it's important to look for a lifeline. A sliver of hope or a whisp of sunlight on a dreary day.

Fans are looking forward to the return of 4th year man Keegan Murray to help right the ship.

While Keegan has not ascended to the level of an all-star, Keegan has made definite strides in particular with regards to his defensive presence and his rebounding.

Domantas Sabonis is off to a slow start due to injuries and is still ranked 4th in the NBA in rebounding, but he needs some help. Drew Eubanks has been a pleasant surprise coming off the bench and keeping the Kings in games, but Jonas Valanciunas has been sorely missed.

Gone are the days when the celebrated big man would come off the bench and give the Kings perhaps the best one-two punch in basketball.

Fans will forever scratch their heads and ask the question why, as the Kings allowed Valanciunas to walk out the back door and sign with the Denver Nuggets. Not surprisingly, the Nuggets are in the top 10 in rebounding while the Kings rank 25th in the league.

But the conundrum is not just the lack of rebounding or even the lack of talent on this Sacramento team. It resides in their inability to work together as a team and play up to their individual ability. Cohesive they are not, and sadly the answer at point guard in Dennis Schrader has been a bust when he's in the starting lineup.

Head coach Doug Christie sent Schrader to the bench when his contribution became almost nonexistent, and surprisingly Dennis responded when 2 stellar games in a row.

Yes, there is talent on this team, but knowing how to place the talent so the team begins to flow has been a mystery.

Ten games back with a 3-11 start is far from what the Kings franchise had

expected, and it has prompted pundits and fans alike to begin calling for a complete rebuilding of the team.

What that represents to Kings fans is the likelihood that your favorite player may soon be playing for another franchise, and it's a hard pill to swallow.

For me, over the course of just one year, I saw Davion Mitchell, DeAaron Fox, Trey Lyles, Jonas Valanciunas, and Isaac Jones all cast to the winds, and I believe the Kings would be a much better team with a much better record if they had all 5 of these players back.

Bad decisions simply must stop. Some were made from the Monte McNair administration, but some are from current brain trust with Scott Perry at the helm. Make no mistake about it, Vivek Ranadive has had his hand in many if not all the player fax paus, and if things are going to change for the better, the owner must start letting the GM and coaches have some level of autonomy.

But fans are buying tickets and going to games with expectations. How can the players and coaches turn humbling defeats into victories.

Coaches must start analyzing the talent on this team and putting them in positions to win. That means using the strengths of every player and giving him the opportunity to use those strengths.

The Kings have a player under a guaranteed contract that has played in one game for limited minutes by the name of Doug McDermott. McDermott has a reputation for sinking 3's with great consistency but he has all but been forgotten.

Yes, there are bigger fish to fry than this example, but it starts with the coaching, and getting a maximum effort out of every player every night. Fans need to see that the players care as much as they do.

This team can still win games and even back-to-back games. Let's keep rooting for this squad and see if we can make some noise.

Don't lose heart Kings fans. These players are our extended family, and we need to treat them that way!

All the best!

Your thoughts are always welcome at vgharriskingsfan@gmail.com. ★

California is a High-Tax State

Are More Taxes Balm for Its Budget Deficits?



By Dan Walters, CALMatters.org

California has long had the reputation — backed by copious data — of being a high-tax state, which made Gov. Gavin Newsom's declaration last June, in a prerecorded State of the State address, a bit startling. "Here's the truth Republicans never tell you: California is not a high-tax state," Newsom said.

Later he clarified his assertion, saying California's taxes on low-income residents are relatively lower than those in red states.

"Catering to big business and the rich is also why red states tax their lowest earners far more than California does. They punish you when you're struggling, but give you a free pass when you're wealthy," the governor said.

There's some truth to that. California's very progressive income tax system, with the nation's highest marginal rate of 13.3%, makes its state budget highly dependent on taxing incomes of its wealthiest residents, while those in low- and moderate-income brackets pay little or no income taxes.

Nevertheless, taxes imposed by state and local governments put California in the highest ranks of the 50 states, not only in total — more than \$400 billion a year from all sources — but in per capita terms

— more than \$10,000 each — and as a percentage of its \$3.6 trillion in total personal income.

The Washington-based Tax Foundation ranks Californians' state and local tax burden 48th, one of the highest in the nation, out-taxed only by New York and New Jersey.

"California combines high tax rates with an uncompetitive tax structure, yielding one of the worst rankings on the Index," the Tax Foundation says.

The state's \$322 billion 2025-26 budget counts on \$297 billion from about a dozen different taxes, while cities, counties, school districts and other local agencies take in another \$100 billion or so, primarily from property taxes and local shares of the sales tax.

The budget anticipates \$207 billion in general fund revenues. So far revenue is running a bit ahead, but general fund spending is budgeted at \$226 billion. Maneuvers to cover the gap include shifting \$7.1 billion from emergency reserves, pushing the June 2026 state payroll into the following fiscal year and tapping special funds for loans.

State budget experts call it a "structural deficit" that will continue indefinitely in the absence of either sharp spending reductions or tax increases.

There's little appetite for the former in a Legislature dominated by Democrats but some support for the latter. The California Taxpayers Association recently reported that legislators proposed more than \$16 billion in new taxes and fees during the recently concluded 2025 session.

The battle over taxes

appears to be headed for the 2026 ballot, with two pro-taxation measures being pushed by public employee unions and other left-leaning groups and one that would create a new hurdle for local tax increases.

One proposal, backed by the California Teachers Association, would make permanent a temporary tax increase on high-income Californians, first approved in 2012 to close a budget deficit and later extended to 2030 via a ballot measure. All of its revenue, as much as \$15 billion a year, would go to K-12 schools and community colleges.

A second measure, sponsored mainly by the Service Employees International Union-United Healthcare Workers West, would impose a one-time 5% tax on the wealth of California's billionaires, raising about \$100 billion, which would be spent at the rate of \$25 billion a year to cover the state's structural deficit and prop up health care services.

The third, sponsored by the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association, would overturn a state Supreme Court ruling and re-impose a two-thirds voter approval requirement on all proposed local taxes designated for particular purposes.

California is a blue state with relatively high taxes now. Do voters want to add more or make it difficult to add more?

Dan Walters is one of the most decorated and widely syndicated columnists in California history, authoring a column four times a week that offers his view and analysis of the state's political, economic, social and demographic trends. ★

Social Security Matters

Did the Obama-era Social Security Tax Cuts Hurt the Program?



By Russell Gloor, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: I will be retiring early next year but my question to you is: During the Obama administration, payroll taxes that employees pay were cut in half from 6.2% to 3.1%, while the employer's part stayed the same at 6.2%. This continued for around a year I think. This was an attempt at giving people a tax cut, which I think was a bad idea or maybe the wrong way to have done it. How much damage do you think this may have caused to Social Security? **Signed: Soon to Retire.**

Dear Soon to Retire: FYI, the Obama-era cut in the employee portion of FICA payroll taxes and SECA (self-employment tax) was a temporary measure, which has long since expired. However, the legislation which enabled that cut in employee FICA/SECA taxes also included

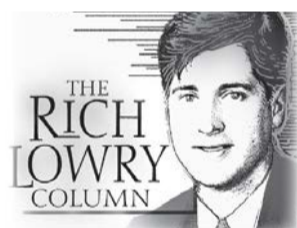
a provision to replenish the Social Security Trust Funds from the General US Treasury in an amount equal to the estimated loss of tax revenue to the Trust Funds. So, in effect, there was little or no impact on the Social Security Trust Funds.

FYI, the Trustees of Social Security have been projecting for many years that the Social Security reserves would be fully depleted in the mid-2030s, unless Congress takes action to reform the SS program. Unfortunately, Congress has not yet taken any meaningful action to accomplish that reform, and the current projection from the Trustees is that all Social Security reserves will be depleted in about 2033, necessitating an across the board cut of about 21% in everyone's benefit. Time is running short, and we see signs that Congress is finally starting to seriously discuss Social Security reform.

At AMAC, we have developed and submitted to various Congressional Representatives a reform plan which would restore Social Security to full solvency. You can see AMAC's suggested plan at www.amac.us/social-security-guarantee. And

AMAC is working every day in Washington, D.C. to promote Social Security reform to avoid future cuts in benefits. We believe and hope that Congress will eventually reform the Social Security program to avoid future benefit cuts but, unfortunately, not until they can muster sufficient bipartisanship to make the hard choices needed. To this end, contacting your Congressional Representative to demand Social Security reform now would be a good thing to do. The longer Congress delays reform, the harder the choices will be.

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Americans are going to get a little healthier. President Trump cut deals with the drugmakers Eli Lilly and Novo Nordisk to increase access to obesity drugs in a major benefit to American public health.

The agreements are a win-win-win -- good for consumers, good for the companies and good for Trump.

One of the most irrational superstitions of our time is that Big Pharma, which has long been routinely delivering near-miraculous therapeutics to extend and improve our lives, is a public enemy. Its latest breakthrough is a class of so-called GLP-1 drugs that make it easier to lose weight and to avoid associated serious health problems, from Type 2 diabetes to heart disease.

The basic dynamic of the Trump deals is that the companies will, through lower prices, expand their market share, thus generating more revenue. The companies also get tariff relief and expedited review for select drugs.

Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the MAHA leader with a paranoid streak about modern medical advances, has been hostile to GLP-1 drugs, the most famous of which is Ozempic, sold by Novo Nordisk.

If everyone could do as many pushups and pullups as the hyper-fit 71-year-old Kennedy, perhaps we could turn our back on GLP-1s.

Certainly, RFK Jr. is cor-

Yes, Ozempic for All

rect that Americans should eat better and work out more. But our body mass index has been increasing for about 150 years, as we've made calories cheaper and more abundant over time. As it happens, the things that we like to eat or drink that are bad for us -- fast food, soda, chips, cookies -- are cheap, convenient and taste good.

Even if we manage to convince people that they should eat more fruit, vegetables and legumes, while taking a Peloton class every day, not everyone is going to do it as a matter of lifestyle constraints, individual preference or simple lack of willpower.

There's also the fact that once you put on weight, physiological changes make it more difficult to shed it.

About 40% of Americans are obese. Wouldn't it be great for them -- and for American society at large, which spends roughly \$170 billion a year on obesity-related medical costs -- if there were a safe, relatively convenient way for them to slim down?

Lo and behold, here it is. The GLP-1s started out as a treatment for diabetes and have exploded in popularity as weight-loss drugs.

Trump's reflex to make it easier for people to obtain Ozempic and the like -- while, not incidentally, boosting his reputation as the nation's foremost deal-maker -- is the correct one. Drug pricing is complicated, but by expanding the sale of the drugs direct to consumers, the companies can reduce prices. Meanwhile, Medicare will do

more to cover the drugs, also bringing down their cost.

According to Gallup, about 12% of Americans report having used a GLP-1 drug at some point for weight loss, a stunning increase from about 6% in early 2024. Not coincidentally, Gallup is also now showing a slight dip in obesity. From 2008 -- when the polling organization regularly began asking about weight -- to 2022, the percentage of obese Americans increased by 14 percentage points, to nearly 40%.

Where any number of fashionable diets and continual government exhortations for more physical exertion have failed (before RFK Jr., Michelle Obama was urging, "Let's Move!"), drugs to slow digestion and reduce the urge to eat are working.

The percentage of Americans using GLP-1s will inevitably keep growing, especially if prices continue to go down, if more oral GLP-1s come online in addition to injectables, and if other medical benefits of the drugs emerge. GLP-1s could easily match the saturation level of statins, the cholesterol-reducing drugs.

By all means, we should all eat more arugula. Until then, we have found a pharmaceutical path to alleviating an ongoing health crisis. President Trump and the drug companies are to be congratulated for their creative cooperation to make it available to more Americans.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review. (c) 2025 by King Features Synd., Inc. ★

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SECURITY LOGS

Following is a summary of activity for the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Security Department for the following dates. Note: these log entries are condensed. For full security log details, go to the CSD website at rmcsd.com.

Nov. 4
1:25 p.m., Murieta Plaza El Gallo restaurant, black Jeep Cherokee that had been running since 7 a.m. per the reporting party. Upon arrival, vehicle was unoccupied and running. No registration or any paperwork identifying the owner was found. Vehicle was turned off and secured. It is believed owner did this by accident and walked off with the key.

Nov. 9
4:01 p.m. and 4:10 p.m., Resident 32 mph in 25 mph zone on Lago Drive at Pescado Circle. Citations issued.

4:15 p.m., North Gate reported a gate runner. Two Jeep Wranglers ignored officer request to leave and proceeded into the community. Vehicles arrived to use lakes without any identification or resident invitation. Patrol conducted area search. During

inspection patrol observed both vehicles traveling outbound on Murieta Parkway. Both vehicles proceeded toward the exit and left Murieta northeast on Jackson Road without any further incidents.

Nov. 10
8:51 a.m., Stonehouse Park: Reporting party stated multiple dogs off leash. Upon arrival all areas were checked; all parkgoers were found to be in compliance.

3:49 p.m., Report that two electric dirt motorcycles were unloaded from a truck at Puerto Drive near Guadalupe Drive. Riders proceeded to ride toward the Residence construction. Patrol did not locate motorcycles or a truck in the area upon arrival. Calero, Chesbro, Clementia north back area inspection: negative results.

10 p.m., South Gate call: Child missing. Officer Perepelka located child in Gazebo Park area. Mother was advised, then picked up child and returned home.

11:25 p.m., Report of juveniles vandalizing private property: Patrol arrived at Guadalupe Drive. No visible damage. Unable to locate subject or

reported vehicle, a white sedan.

Nov. 11
2:49 a.m., Three vehicles parked overnight in residence driveway. Citation issued.

4:34 p.m., Trespassing, 15000 block Jackson Road, county bridge: Report of male adult walking with fishing gear toward the Cosumnes River. Upon arrival, patrol located male adult fishing southwest of the bridge. Patrol advised of Cosumnes River park zone/daily pass requirement. Subject was unable to provide patrol with a daily pass. Subject was requested to leave area; subject complied without any incidents.

Nov. 12
12:30 a.m., Resident parked overnight in guest parking off Brisa Lane. Citation issued.

Nov. 15
10:37 p.m., Call of reckless driving in Lake Calero parking area. Upon arrival, two SUVs seen at the lake. Vehicles departed with no further issue. Unable to see license plates due to weather. Vehicles departed at a fast speed from lake. Will be on the lookout for vehicles. ★



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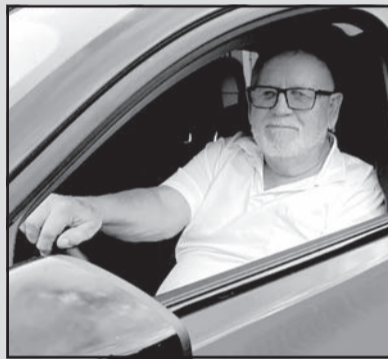
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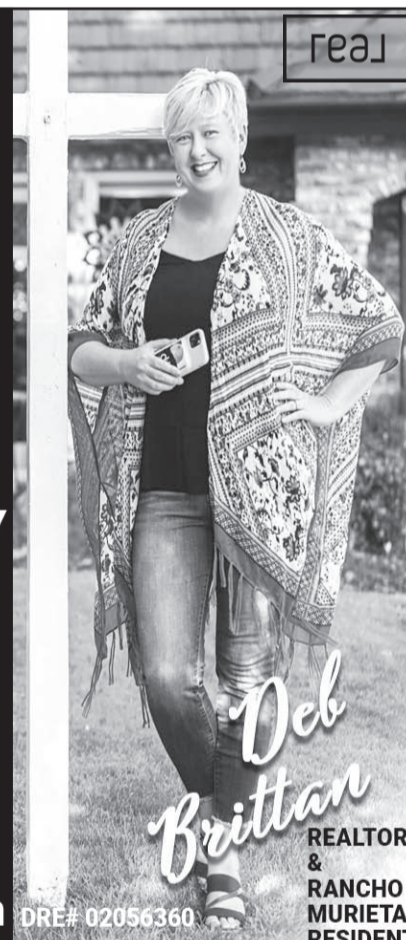
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Veterans Day Event Celebrates Heroes



World War II veteran Jerry Hathaway grabs a donut to make a toast.



Melissa Mineni, president of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary 12215, welcomes attendees to the event her group is hosting.

Continued from page 1
 on the overhead monitor throughout the event.

“Every picture tells a story,” veteran Trent Pridemore said.

A blast from the present came in the form of hand-drawn cards created by students from Cosumnes River Elementary School and The Ranch Preschool.

Auxiliary member Norma Dawdy organized the event for the second year in a row. She and other members had decorated the RMA meeting room the previous day, setting tables and hanging decorations. They also assembled raffle baskets.

“We have the best group of ladies,” Dawdy said. “There is no way that one person could do it alone.”

Dawdy also expressed appreciation to the local merchants who donated to the raffle and noted that this year’s turnout was much stronger than last year.

Melissa Mineni, president of the Auxiliary, opened the short program.

“This is about fellowship and sharing a cup of coffee and a donut and a heartfelt thank you to the men and women who have served our country,” she said

Mineni then announced the presentation of the flag and the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance led by Scout Troop 633. She also introduced VFW Post member Jenny Roland, who sang the national anthem, and Auxiliary Chaplain Norma Dawdy, who recited a prayer.

VFW Post Commander Mick Mineni spoke next.

“Today we honor not just those who returned to us but also those who made the

ultimate sacrifice,” he said. “It is our duty to ensure their stories are not forgotten.”

Later in the gathering, after most attendees had left, Mineni asked for a moment of silence at 11:11 a.m. That observance marks the time when, at 11 a.m. on Nov. 11, 1918, the armistice between the Allies and Germany went into effect, ending the fighting on the Western Front in World War I. The date became known as Armistice Day and was later renamed Veterans Day to honor all American veterans.

After stressing the importance of remembering and carrying forward the legacy of those who served before, Mineni paused to control his emotions.

“I lost 42 soldiers who did not come home, so that is important to me,” he said. “You all have similar stories, so please join me in a moment of silence.”

The Rancho Murieta Caregivers Support Group originated the “Been There, Done That Café” to celebrate Veterans Day 10 years ago. JoAnn Young, whose late father-in-law, John Prenez, was a World War II veteran, first proposed the idea. The original organizing committee also included Nan Parquette, Judy Prenez, Erin Reed and Berniece Jones.

When the VFW Auxiliary took over the event last year, Melissa Mineni said her group was honored to continue the tradition started by the caregiver group. “That is what we are here for: to support the veterans and the community,” she said.

See additional photos at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook.



Sharing war stories are veterans Jim Clifton, left, Bob Nicholson, Karl Winklebrandt and Graydon Eckard.



Veteran Dan Pennington enjoys a handmade card so much that he sent a message to Cosumnes River Elementary to thank the young artist.



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